

Docket No. F-6768

Ser. No. 09/719,323

**AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS:**

Please replace the claims with the claims provided in the listing below wherein status, amendments, additions and cancellations are indicated.

1. - 18. (Canceled)

19. (Currently amended) A method of manufacturing a rechargeable battery, comprising the steps of:

interposing a separator between a positive electrode plate and a negative electrode plate to form a multilayer electrode structure, said positive electrode plate and said negative electrode plate including uncoated end portions;

winding said multilayer electrode structure in spiral fashion to form an electrode plate group having a spiral configuration, said positive electrode plate, said negative electrode plate and said separator being positioned relative one another prior to the winding of said multilayer structure such that after being wound the uncoated end portions of said positive electrode plate and said negative electrode plate extend respectively from opposite ends of the electrode plate group thereby defining uncoated projected portions;

inserting said electrode plate group into a jig cavity in a molding jig having

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a generally cylindrical interior configuration, the electrode plate group being positioned with a winding axis thereof generally codirectional with a central axis of the jig cavity, said jig cavity having an opening at one end thereof; [[and]]

subjecting said electrode plate group to pressure by a pressing member inserted via said opening and moved in a direction of said winding axis to bend the uncoated projected portions of said positive electrode plate and said negative electrode plate in a radially inward direction of the spiral configuration of the electrode plate group to form flattened regions on the opposite ends of the electrode plate group which approximate respective flat planes extending orthogonally to the winding axis of said electrode plate group[[.]];

removing said electrode plate group from the molding jig;

pressing a positive electrode current collecting plate and a negative electrode current collecting plate into contact with the flattened regions on respective ones of the opposite ends of the electrode plate group corresponding to the positions of the uncoated projected portions of the positive electrode plate and the negative electrode plate; and

welding the current collecting plates to the electrode plate group at a plurality of locations within the flattened regions.

20. (Canceled)

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21. (Currently amended) The method of manufacturing a rechargeable battery according to claim ~~[[20]]~~19, wherein said step of welding includes laser-welding the current collecting plates in a circumferential direction of surfaces of the current collecting plates in radial fashion from a middle towards an outer periphery of the electrode plate group to form an electrode plate group assembly.

22. (Currently amended) The method of manufacturing a rechargeable battery according to claim ~~[[20]]~~ 19 or 21, further comprising the steps of:  
accommodating said electrode plate group assembly in a battery case; and  
vacuum-impregnating the electrode plate group assembly within the battery case with an electrolyte.

23. (Previously presented) The method of manufacturing a rechargeable battery according to claim 22, further comprising the steps of:  
connecting the current collecting plates each to a respective one of a battery closure and the battery case; and  
sealing the battery case with the battery closure.

24. - 33. (Canceled)